

HOUSE BILL 2798

By Buck

AN ACT to name a segment of State Route 53 in Smith County in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Linden Lee Gill, United States Air Force, Retired.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges to honor those courageous members of the United States Armed Forces who have made great sacrifices in the defense of our nation; and

WHEREAS, no soldier is more deserving of this honor than Lieutenant Colonel Linden Lee Gill, United States Air Force, Retired; and

WHEREAS, Linden Lee Gill was born in Gordonsville, Tennessee on June 20, 1928, at the home of his grandparents, Thomas Jefferson and Mary Cochrum Lancaster. When he was four, the Gill family, father Frank and mother Kate Gill, acquired a small farm on State Route 53 midway between Gordonsville and Carthage. Most of his childhood years were spent on this highway, either walking, hitch hiking, motorcycling, driving, and later flying over; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, the Korean War had started and the need for Air Force pilots prompted Linden to join the Air Force, and after a time as an enlisted airman he applied for and was assigned to pilot training as an Aviation Cadet. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and awarded the wings of a U. S. Air Force Pilot on August 22, 1953; and

WHEREAS, while stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton Ohio, Lt. Colonel Gill checked out to fly the Lockheed Starfighter F-104 aircraft. He was in one of a few fighter squadrons to fly the new aircraft to exceed twice the speed of sound and set altitude records in excess of one hundred and fifteen thousand feet. He would fly this aircraft in several future assignments, off and on, for thirteen years, including his tenure as Air Defense Command Safety Officer for the Starfighter in Colorado Springs; and

WHEREAS, while stationed at Elmendorf AFB in Alaska, Lt. Colonel Gill flew the delta winged Convair F-102 in the air defense mission for almost four years; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, Lt. Colonel Gill received an assignment for a combat tour in Vietnam, arriving there in June of 1968 following check out in the Skyraider single engine propeller driven Dive Bomber; and

WHEREAS, during his one year assignment in Vietnam, he flew 122 combat missions in the Skyraider and was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, and other service medals; and

WHEREAS, upon his return from Vietnam, Lt. Colonel Gill was assigned to Homestead AFB Florida for transition back to the Starfighter. After the fighter squadron was de-activated, he was re-assigned to Ft. Lee, Virginia where he retired from the Air Force; and

WHEREAS, with his retirement from the Air Force In 1973, Linden Gill had completed a career of twenty-two years, but one that had essentially started at birth. He was born in the year following Lindbergh's historic flight and carried the nickname "Lindy" for most of his life, as did "Lucky Lindy" Lindbergh his namesake; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Colonel Gill felt pre-ordained to become a pilot, a mission which he accomplished. During his military career he flew over four thousand flights, most all of them in single engine jet and reciprocating engine fighters. In addition to the combat missions in Vietnam, most of the remainder of his flights were in all-weather-Interceptors in the Air Defense Command and Alaskan Air Command; and

WHEREAS, even after his career in the Air Force, he continued his aviation connection by serving for some time as Director of Airports for the City of Knoxville, before opting for his own business as a Real Estate Broker for several years; and

WHEREAS, from the earliest days of his distinguished military career spent at Air Force bases around the nation and around the world to the golden years of his retirement in Knoxville today, Lt. Colonel Gill has been fortunate to share love and companionship with his wife of 52 years, the former Betty Jean Motes; they have four sons, Steven, Gary, James, and Scott, who live in four different states, so they must travel a good deal to visit their six grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Colonel Gill's valiant service in the military and his love of his family, his fellow citizens, and his country, as exemplified in his heroic service in defense of all that he held dear, stand as enduring examples of all the characteristics that have ensured the continued freedom of our nation and the preservation of its ideals over the course of our history; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly wishes to name a segment of the highway on which his family lived and he spent his childhood to permanently commemorate Lieutenant Colonel Linden Lee Gill's singular patriotism, courage, and sacrifice as an officer in the United States Air Force; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the segment of State Route 53 in Smith County from the southern corporate limits of the City of Carthage to the northern corporate limits of the City of Gordonsville is hereby designated the "Lt. Colonel Linden Lee Gill Highway" as a lasting tribute to an officer and gentleman who served his country courageously and with great personal sacrifice in Vietnam and around the globe.

SECTION 2. The department of transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating the segment of State Route 53 described in Section 1 as the "Lt. Colonel Linden Lee Gill Highway".

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall become operative only if the cost of the manufacture and installation of such signs is paid to the department of transportation from non-state funds within one (1) year of the effective date of this act. Such payment shall be made prior to any expenditure by the state for the manufacture or installation of such signs. The department shall return any unused portion of the estimated cost to the person or entity paying for such signs

within thirty (30) days of the erection of such signs. If the actual cost exceeds the estimated cost, an amount equal to the difference in such costs shall be remitted to the department in non-state funds within thirty (30) days of the sponsoring person or entity receiving an itemized invoice of the actual cost from the department.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.